Amendments to the Claims:

1-21. (Canceled)

22. (Currently Amended) A method for evaluating whether a sample contains HBV that may have escaped immunological detection of HBV surface antigen (HBsAg), said method comprising the steps of:

i) mixing the sample with a set of first and second primers ~~having~~ consisting of SEQ ID NO: 1 and SEQ ID NO: 2, respectively;

ii) performing PCR on the mixture generated in step i) to generate an amplified primer extension product;

iii) determining whether the amplified product comprises nucleic acid encoding major HBV surface antigen (SHBsAg) having a mutation at amino acid position 130, from glycine to aspartic acid, or at amino acid position 131 from threonine to asparagine; and

iv) identifying said mutation indicating that the sample contains HBV that may have escaped immunological detection of HBsAg.

23-25. (Canceled)

26. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 22 further comprising determining whether the amplified product comprises nucleic acid encoding major HBV surface antigen (SHBsAg) having a mutation at position 133 from methionine to threonine.

27. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 22 further comprising determining whether the amplified product comprises nucleic acid encoding major HBV surface antigen (SHBsAg) having a mutation at position 145 from glycine to arginine.

28-42. (Canceled)

43. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 22, further comprising:

first subjecting the sample to reverse transcription conditions to yield single or double stranded cDNA molecules from HBV-derived mRNA.

44. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 22 wherein the first primer is labeled with a reporter molecule capable of giving an identifiable signal and the second primer is labeled with a capturable moiety, or the first primer is labeled with a capturable moiety and the second primer is labeled with a reporter molecule capable of giving an identifiable signal.

45. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 44 wherein the primer labeled with a capturable moiety is immobilized to a solid support.

46. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 44 wherein the capturable moiety is biotin and the reporter molecule is fluorescein or Texas Red.